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RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 0013  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 001073

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OMAN ON SFI/MEGAPORTS PILOT IN SALALAH

REF: MUSCAT 875

CLASSIFIED BY: L. Victor Hurtado, Ambassador, Department of State,  
Embassy Muscat; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) On December 8, officials from the Government of Oman, the Port of Salalah and the USG met and discussed a six-month plan of operational testing for Megaports equipment in Salalah. In a meeting with H.E. Said Hamdoon al-Harthy, Undersecretary for Ports at the Ministry of Transportation and Communication (MOTC), Brigadier General Issa al-Kiyumi, Royal Oman Police (ROP) Director General of Customs, LtCol Naji al-Abri, ROP Customs, CEO Martijn Van de linde, Port of Salalah, Deputy CEO Ahmed Ali Akaak, Port of Salalah, DC based US Department of Energy and DHS/Customs and Border Protection officials, DCM and poloff, the USG presented a plan that had been developed and agreed to prior to the meeting by the USG and the port; Omani officials committed to reviewing the details quickly and reporting back any concerns.

¶2. (C) This meeting was a follow-up to the port CEO's request that we have a high-level meeting to assess buy-in, particularly of the Omani government, prior to the beginning of the project (reftel). All parties concurred that trial period was necessary as additional information and data is required about the operational impact of scanning at a transshipment port in order to make further decisions about the future of the project. It was agreed to meet again with this group at the end of the project to discuss a way forward. Al-Harthy was concerned about the potential exposure of port employees to radiation, and it was agreed that Omani officials would certify the Secure Freight Initiative (SFI) Rapiscan equipment for safety after the completion of an upgrade that is in process. After the formal meeting was over, the DG of Customs expressed to poloff his ongoing concern about his lack of appropriate levels of staffing to support the project.

¶3. (C) Comment: Although to date most of our work on Megaports and SFI has gone through ROP Customs, Van de linde specifically insisted that the Undersecretary from MOTC be in the meeting, as ultimately the port is responsible to MOTC, not to ROP Customs. Although this meeting was harmonious, we anticipate the meeting at the end of the project to be more contentious. While the CEO has agreed to the trial, he does not want the Megaports equipment to remain at the port after that time, and in some fashion it is possible MOTC will support his view. However, ROP Customs will likely want to continue the project. The Omanis continue to express concerns about the safety of radiation in every meeting on this topic. End Comment.

Schmierer